

# RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## Quarterly

VOLUME XII No. 4

FALL 1982

### Constitution.

Art. 1. This society shall be called the Union Book Club.

Art. 2. The officers of this Club shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, and Treasurer, to be elected annually.

Art. 3. The duties of the President shall be to preside at all meetings, and settle any question of dispute. In her absence the Vice-President shall take her place.

The Secretaries shall conduct the correspondence, and take charge of the preparation and delivery of the books.

The Treasurer shall receive and disburse all moneys. These officers shall constitute a Board of Directors for the transaction of business.

Art. 4. There shall be annually appointed a committee of two, whose duty shall be to make a semi-annual inspection of the books for the purpose of keeping them in

THE UNION BOOK CLUB  
A CENTURY OF BOOKS

# A Century of Books

By Mary Beth Bloomer<sup>1</sup>

Rutland's Union Book Club, founded in March of 1882, has offered continuous good reading to its 26 members for its first 100 years and still shows signs of vigor which should last for another century.

The original club constitution has been amended only by the increases in annual membership dues from two dollars to the current 10 dollars and a series of fines that were imposed for neglecting to pass the sets of books in correct order, on time and in good condition. These rules are no longer necessary. The founding ladies were far-seeing: they did not copy the study course concept of the Chautauqua Literary Circle (founded in 1887) but established a book-reading club like the popular Book-of-the-Month-Club of more recent years. There have never been book reviews, but if a particular book has been offensive to one of the members, on occasion she has made a substitution during the year! Even though the club was organized to be a reading group, the titles of the first 57 books purchased from Spaulding & Co. for \$71.81 reflected a desire for self-improvement:

Aspects of Poetry  
A Journey in Brazil  
Self Culture  
The Booths

England Within and Without  
What Girls Can Do  
Meals for Millions  
Familiar Science Studies

The average cost of each book has increased 15 dollars in 100 years, the total this year being \$344 for 72 books, but the original desire for education, as well as entertainment, has not changed, as shown by some of the books now circulating:

Second Opinion  
Paper Money  
The Covenant  
The Origin

Three Mile Island  
Lucy  
Pioneer Women  
Maria Callas

After the first year the books were purchased for a long time from E. P. Dutton & Co. of New York City, but they have been bought locally since Rutland has had book stores. In the beginning, to protect the books, they were covered with blue cambric, which at first was purchased from Chalmers and later from Sterns. The membership and book lists were printed at the Tuttle Printing Co. With the advent of clear plastic in rolls, the club began covering the books with plastic in 1968, and xeroxing the book lists in 1973, thereby keeping operating expenses down but sacrificing the distinctive blue cloth covers recognizable as "Union Book Club".

The social highlight of the year, inaugurated in 1883, has remained the book auction for members. Perhaps we should return to the early days when husbands were invited, and the auctioneer was male. The first auctioneer was Colonel W. G. Veasey who raised 30 dollars at the auction held at the Berwick House. Howard Dana took over his job until 1901 when a devoted Henry H. Ross (brother to the Charles Ross of the Ross-Huntress department store) volunteered his services for the next 17 years! He was also a long-time Masonic secretary: longevity in office must have been his forte. The women's movement insinuated itself into the club, because now no men are included in the auction. So far, none has applied for membership in the club. At year's end, after the members have read their books (two weeks for each set) the books are sold to the highest bidder, thereby giving members an opportunity to increase their libraries for a modest sum, while bringing revenue to the treasury for next year's purchases. The auction held in June of 1982 realized 150 dollars. We take note of those books not popular enough to bring even one dollar, when we buy for the next time.

<sup>1</sup>Immediate past president, Union Book Club.

## COVER:

This early copy of the constitution sets forth an organizational framework that basically has been modified very little over the course of a century.

# List of Books for 1889-90.

Fagots for the Fireside.....	Lucretia Peabody Hale
The Life of Mrs. Godolphin.....	John Evelyn
Looking Backward.....	Edward Bellamy
Gibraltar.....	Henry M. Field
Mr. Tangler's Vacations.....	E. P. Hale
Elizabeth Barrett Browning.....	John H. Ingram
In Hot Haste.....	Mary E. Hullah
Memory, What it Is and How to Improve It.....	David Kay
Proverbs, Maxims and Phrases of all Ages.....	Compiled by Robert Christy
Days Near Paris.....	Augustus J. C. Hare
A Collection of Letters of Thackeray.....	Jane Octavia Brookfield
Miss Bretherton.....	Mrs. Humphrey Ward
The English in the West Indies.....	James Anthony Froude
What I Remember.....	Thomas Adolphus Trollope
Miss Boyle's Romance.....	
The Mendelssohn Family.....	Sebastian Hensel
Before the Curfew and other Poems.....	O. W. Holmes
The Tales of the Sixty Mandarins.....	P. V. Ramaswami Raju
The Guardians.....	
Bybury to Beacon Street.....	Mrs. A. M. Diaz
The Girl's Own Indoor Book.....	
On Horseback.....	Charles Dudley Warner
Victorian Poets.....	Edmund Clarence Stedman
On the Track of Ulysses.....	W. J. Stillman
The Ordeal of Richard Feverel.....	George Meredith
Divided Lives.....	Edgar Fawcett
Master of His Fate.....	Amelia E. Barr
Remember the Alamo.....	Amelia E. Barr
The McVeys.....	Joseph Kirkland
The American Commonwealth.....	James Bryce
Women and Men.....	Thomas Wentworth Higginson
A Man Story.....	E. W. Howe
A Hard-Won Victory.....	Grace Denio Litchfield
A Blockaded Family.....	Parthenia Antoinette Hague
Our New Mistress.....	Charlotte M. Yonge
Maximina.....	Don Amando Palacio Valdes
John Ward, Preacher.....	Margaret Deland
Loyalty George.....	Mrs. Parr
The Youngest Miss Lorton.....	Nora Perry
Sebastopol.....	Count Leo Tolstoy
Bructon's Bayou and Miss Defarge, John Habberton, F. H. Burnett	
Hints about Men's Dress.....	By a New York Club Man
Bryan Maurice.....	Rev. Walter Mitchell
The Admirable Lady Biddy Fane.....	Frank Barrett
The Elect Lady.....	George MacDonald
Children's Stories of the Great Scientists.....	Henrietta Christian Wright
The Story of Helen Troy.....	
The Principles of the Art of Conversation.....	J. P. Mahaffey
The Five Talents of Women.....	By the author of "Manners Makyth Man."
Letters of General C. G. Gordon to his Sister, M. A. Gordon.....	
The Story of an African Farm.....	Ralph Iron
Letters to Dead Authors.....	Andrew Lang
The Soul of the Far East.....	Percival Lowell
Doctor and Patient.....	S. Weir Mitchell
Lastchance Junction.....	By author of "Cape Cod Folks."
Ancient Rome in the Light of Recent Discoveries.....	Rodolfo Lanciani
Two Little Confederates.....	Thomas Nelson Page
Daylight Land.....	W. H. H. Murray
A Half Century in Salem.....	M. C. D. Sillsbee
The Makers of Venice.....	Mrs. Oliphant
At the Sign of the Lyre.....	Austin Dobson
Otto of the Silver Hand.....	Howard Pyle
The Counting-Out Rhymes of Children.....	H. C. Bolton
The Conflict of East and West in Egypt.....	John Eliot Bowen
Poetry, Comedy and Duty.....	C. C. Everett
The Life of Constans L. Goodell, D. D.....	A. H. Currier, D. D.
Lights of Two Centuries.....	Edward Everett Hale
Adelaide Ristori.....	
The Silence of Dean Maitland.....	Maxwell Grey
Nooks and Corners of the New England Coast.....	Samuel Adams Drake

The 1889-90 book list vividly indicates not only changes in literature but changes in America itself during the past century.

# UNION BOOK CLUB.

Mrs. GEORGE H. CHENEY, Prest.

Mrs. LILLIAN E. GOULD, Sec'y.

Mrs. EDWARD DANA, Vice-Prest.

Mrs. WELLINGTON, Asst. Sec'y.

Mrs. W. C. CLEMENT, Treas.

Mrs. M. G. EVERTS, Mrs. HENRY HARMAN, Investigating Committee.

The dates filling the blanks below signify the time when books should be received.

NAME.	RECEIVED.
MRS. T. R. BAILEY.	
MRS. EVERTS.	
MRS. CLARENCE PERKINS.	
MRS. SWININGTON.	
MRS. WELLINGTON.	
MRS. KENDALL.	
MRS. NORTON.	
MRS. GOULD.	
MISS VINA ROSS.	
MRS. W. R. PAGE.	
MRS. GOULDING.	
MRS. CLEMENT.	
MRS. J. C. BARRETT.	
MRS. C. P. HARRIS.	
MRS. HENRY CLARK.	
MRS. JOHN ROSS.	
MRS. DANA.	
MRS. DAVID HAYNES.	
MRS. JOHN CRAMTON.	
MRS. P. MELDON.	
MRS. H. P. WILKINS.	
MRS. GEORGE CHENEY.	
MRS. HARMAN.	
MISS KATE ROYCE.	
MRS. J. C. DUNN.	

While few descendants of the 1890 members may still live in Rutland, some of the names remain familiar because of their association with various buildings and streets in the community.

The first mention of a member loaning a book appears in the club minutes in 1953. With the continuing high cost of hard-cover books, loaning has become common practice — 27 books this year.

The books read through the years are an interesting history of current taste in literature and show Mark Twain, Robert Louis Stevenson and Theodore Roosevelt to be popular authors, as they each appeared several years on the book lists. The ones which have become classics began in 1884 with **Robin Hood** and **Lorna Doone**, followed in 1885 by **Ben Hur** and Alcott's **Spinning Wheel Stories**. In 1886, **Treasure Island** was on the list. Ibsen's **Doll House** was read in 1891, as were selections by Jane Austen, Rudyard Kipling and A. Conan Doyle.

A *Rutland Herald* editorial printed in 1979 mentioned Julia C. R. Dorr as having been an early figure in the Union Book Club, but the club records do not support this claim. However, there are many other familiar surnames on the membership roster — Cooke (Mrs. E. F. was the first president), Fox, Edgerton, Kendall, Pond, Field, Temple, Pierpont, Kingsley, Engrem, Tuttle, Cleveland, Meldon, Cramton, Royce. They read like a street map of Rutland.

In 1894 the club members voted to accept new applicants for "fitness" rather than in order of application for membership. This may have been necessary because at an earlier meeting the "nominating committee retired to another room and returned with names of proposed board members. The process had to be repeated, as some declined to serve." In 1885 the club voted that membership could not be transferred, which is the present policy; vacancies are filled from the waiting list of recommended applicants.

Currently the telephone is used to inform the membership of meetings, partly as an economy measure, but a mention was made in the 1889 minutes of "postals" mailed to each member prior to the annual meeting to indicate her "intention to remain or withdraw from the club". The annual turnover of members in the early years numbered five to seven. Now there are members who have been in the club for 20 years, and those on the waiting list consider it a good year when there are two vacancies. More often there are none.

The books are selected each spring by the 26 members acting as a committee of the whole, and most members participate with enthusiasm. One member's selections are scrutinized carefully because sometimes her books have been too explicit for the taste of everyone! Many members assist in covering the books and arranging them into the groups in which they are rotated among the members. The Union Book Club, with a continuous history that covers 100 years and with a waiting list of women wishing to join, shows signs of vigor we expect will enable the Union Book Club to reach its 200th year.

## ≡ CONSTITUTION ≡

— OF THE —

# Union Book Club,

## RUTLAND, VT.

# UNION BOOK CLUB.

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## CONSTITUTION.

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ART. 1. This Society shall be called the "UNION BOOK CLUB."

ART. 2. The officers of this Club shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer, to be elected annually.

ART. 3. The duties of the President shall be to preside at all meetings, and settle any question of dispute. In her absence the Vice-President shall take her place. The Secretaries shall conduct the correspondence, and take charge of the preparation and delivery of the books. The Treasurer shall receive and disburse all moneys.

ART. 4. There shall be annually appointed by the President an executive committee of two, whose duty shall be to collect fines, and to whom any complaints of irregularities shall be submitted. This executive committee, with the officers, shall constitute a Board of Directors for the transaction of business.

ART. 5. The entire Club shall be constituted a committee for the selection of books, with power to meet for this purpose, at such time as shall be designated, when lists of books must be handed in from which to make choice.

ART. 6. The Club shall be limited to twenty-six members.

ART. 7. The annual payment shall be two dollars, with an initiation fee of one dollar additional.

ART. 8. The Secretary shall give each member due notice of the annual meeting. Any member failing to signify to the Secretary her desire to remain in the Club, or to send her yearly fee to the Treasurer on or before the day of the annual meeting, shall be dropped from the list of members. The annual meeting shall be held the *second* Monday in January.

ART. 9. When a vacancy occurs, and there are two or more candidates for membership, they shall be balloted for by the members present at the annual meeting; the majority determining the choice. The good of the Club and the fitness of the candidate shall be considered instead of priority of application.

ART. 10. If a member and her family are absent from the City for one year, her membership is cancelled. No new candidates for membership shall be accepted who are non-residents of the City.

ART. 11. Each member shall obtain the books to which she is entitled from the person whose name immediately precedes her own on the list, every other Saturday.

ART. 12. Books, on completing the circle, must be returned to the Secretary or other officer designated, and if injured or lost, must be replaced. At the end of the year, they shall be sold at auction to the members of the Club and their families.

ART. 13. A fine of fifty cents shall be imposed for neglecting to return the books to the Secretary before the auction.

ART. 14. The Constitution may be altered at any annual meeting by a vote of two-thirds of the members present.

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## Book Review

Jim Shaughnessy. **The Rutland Road** (Second Edition): Howell-North Books, 1981, 436 pp. illustrated. \$30.00.

A friend, the late William White, former president of the New York Central and later of the Delaware and Hudson, once remarked to me that he considered Jim Shaughnessy's book **The Rutland Road** the best of its kind, and, if only he could be here today to see and to read Shaughnessy's second edition, he would say "Amen", for Jim has done an excellent job in bringing us up-to-date on railroad development in western Vermont since the demise of the old Rutland.

**The Rutland Road** makes good reading, for it was a road born in adversity, a railroad that fought to live for over 100 years. Its life was a dramatic one and its story well told in Shaughnessy's book with its superb pictures. The first edition was a sell-out and available copies have become collectors' items.

The second edition deals not only with the life of the old Rutland Railroad but devotes over 50 new pages to its progeny, the Vermont Railway and the Green Mountain Railroad, together with a brief mention of that distant offspring, the St. Lawrence Railroad. The story is a tribute to Vermont cussedness in times of adversity, under the leadership of Governors Keyser and Hoff and the Vermont Legislature. Shippers and the public at large united and today the trains are again rolling over the old Rutland Road, and may they continue to serve Vermont as long as a need is there.

I commend this book for your reading and viewing pleasure.

Gardner A. Caverly  
President, The Rutland Railroad 1954-57

**RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**101 CENTER STREET, RUTLAND, VERMONT 05701**  
**(802)775-2006; 775-0179**

The Rutland Historical Society was founded in 1969 to preserve, study and disseminate the history of the original Town of Rutland as chartered by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth in 1761, now comprised of the City of Rutland (1892) and the Towns of Rutland (1761), Proctor (1886) and West Rutland (1886). The Society maintains and operates The Rutland Museum in the historic Bank of Rutland building built in 1825, now owned by the City of Rutland, and The Vermont Farm and Rural Life Museum at the Vermont State Fair. A research library and the historical collections are maintained in the Museums and the historic Nickwackett Fire Station. Gifts or bequests of articles of historical interest or money are welcome at all times and are deductible for income tax purposes.

The Society publishes the Rutland Historical Society Quarterly for the members and presents public historical programs throughout the year at the Rutland Free Library in the Nella Grimm Fox Room.

Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of dues to the Membership Secretary, Hope E. Hubbard, 248 Lincoln Avenue, Rutland, Vermont 05701. Membership entitles each member to a subscription to four issues each year of the Quarterly, a copy of the Annual Report, the right to vote at business meetings and the benefits of supporting the Museums, monthly programs, library and collections. Dues are \$3.00 a year for regular members and \$5.00 for a family membership; for those wishing to give the Society further support a contributing membership is \$10.00; a sponsor membership is \$25.00; a sustaining membership is \$100.00 (minimum); and a life membership (one payment only) is \$100.00. Members wishing to pay two or more years' dues in advance are encouraged to do so to reduce costs. The expiration date of each membership is listed on the mailing label of the publication. Please send change of address on Postal Service Form 3576 (a postcard available free of charge at your local post office).

Manuscripts are invited; address correspondence to the Editor.

**Editor: Michael L. Austin**  
**Managing Editor: Jean C. Ross**

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RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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Rutland, Vermont 05701

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